

Complaints Handling Policy Re. Safeguarding Children & Young People



1. Purpose and Scope

Purpose:

This policy outlines the procedures for handling complaints regarding safeguarding children. It is designed to ensure that every complaint is dealt with swiftly, fairly, and transparently. Our goal is to uphold the safety and well-being of all children under our care, and to create a culture of openness and continuous improvement.

Scope:

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders of St Marys Rugby League Club. It covers complaints raised by or on behalf of children, parents, guardians, or any other party concerning any aspect of safeguarding and child protection within the organisation.

2. Definitions

Complaint: Any expression of dissatisfaction, whether oral or written, concerning safeguarding practices, incidents, or responses that may compromise a child's safety or well-being.

Safeguarding: Actions and procedures put in place to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of children to enable them to live free from abuse, harm, or neglect.

Child Protection: Specific measures taken to ensure that children are protected from abuse, exploitation, or harm and that appropriate actions are taken to prevent or respond to any form of abuse.

Confidentiality: The principle of ensuring that details of complaints are managed discreetly and shared only with individuals who have a legitimate need to know.

3. Policy Statement

St Marys Rugby League Club is committed to:

- Ensuring every complaint regarding the safeguarding of children is taken seriously and handled with sensitivity and urgency.
- Protecting the rights, dignity, and safety of the child through prompt, impartial, and thorough investigation of all complaints.
- Maintaining transparency and accountability in our complaint management process.
- Learning from each complaint to continually improve practices and prevent future incidents.

4. Guiding Principles

When handling complaints related to safeguarding children, St Marys Rugby League Club adheres to the following principles:

- **Child-Centric:** The primary focus is always on the well-being and protection of the child.
- **Confidentiality:** All complaints will be treated with strict confidentiality and only shared on a need-to-know basis.
- **Transparency and Fairness:** The process will be easily accessible, clearly communicated, and consistently applied.
- **Timeliness:** Complaints will be acknowledged and investigated without undue delay, and within 48 hours of receipt
- **Accountability:** All investigations and outcomes will be documented and reviewed regularly to ensure practices align with the highest safeguarding standards.
- **Support:** Affected individuals will be supported throughout the process with access to information, guidance, and advocacy if needed.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Designated Child Safety Officers

- Complaints can be made to any member of the Junior League Executive, the Club's designated Child Safety Officers.
- The Junior League Executive will coordinate the initial assessment and investigation of each complaint.
- The Junior League Executive will maintain contact with external agencies (eg. police, child protection services) if further investigation is needed.
- All members of the Junior League Executive are well advised on safeguarding practices and complaint handling procedures.

5.2 Senior Management & Board of Directors

- The Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors provide final oversight of the investigation and resolution process.
- The Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors regularly review the policy to ensure effectiveness and compliance.
- The Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors ensure that the Junior League Executive have the resources and support needed to effectively implement the policy.

5.3 All Staff & Volunteers

- **Reporting:** Immediately report any safeguarding concerns or complaints following the procedures outlined in this policy.
- **Cooperation:** Cooperate with any inquiries or investigations.
- **Respect:** Uphold confidentiality and respect for the complainant and the child's well-being at all times.

6. Complaint Reporting Procedure

6.1 How to Report

- In Writing or Orally: Complaints can be submitted verbally (face to face or via phone), in writing, or through electronic communication (eg. Email, private Facebook messenger or Instagram).
- Complaint forms are available on the Club's website and from the Junior League Office.
- Complaints should be directed to a member of the Junior League Executive:

- **Adam Przybyla - Rugby League Manager**

E: aprzybyla@saintsrl.com.au

M: 0407 847 312

- **Geoff Daniela - Community & Development Manager**

E: gdaniela@saintsrl.com.au

M: 0472 802 449

- **Dannielle Lane - Rugby League Administrator**

E: dlane@saintsrl.com.au

M: 0437 304 003

- **Peter Bowler - Jnr League President**

E: peter.bowler@live.com.au

M: 0417 788 522

- **Janelle Borg - Jnr League Secretary**

E: janelle.borg@hotmail.com

M: 0414 855 682

The Junior League Executive Office is adjacent to St Marys Leagues Stadium and open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday. Phone: (02) 9677 7775

- If a member of the Junior League Executive is not available, the complaint should be escalated directly to the Chief Executive Officer via dbentley@saintsrl.com.au or phone (02) 9677 7777.
- Anonymous complaints are accepted; however, providing contact details allows for further clarification and timely follow-up.

6.2 Acknowledgement

- Upon receipt of a complaint, a member of the Junior League Executive shall acknowledge receipt within 48 hours.
- A brief acknowledgment will outline the next steps, expected timeframes, and available support services.

7. Investigation and Resolution Process

7.1 Initial Assessment

- Risk Evaluation: The Junior League Executive will evaluate whether the complaint indicates an immediate risk of harm. If so, emergency safeguarding responses will be activated and the relevant agencies immediately contacted.
- Documentation: All details of the complaint, including the date, time, and circumstances, will be recorded in a secure log.

7.2 Formal Investigation

- To ensure impartiality, the Junior League Executive will collectively investigate the complaint, gather and secure evidence, including witness statements, written documentation, and photographic or digital evidence as appropriate.
- The Junior League Executive will conduct confidential interviews with involved parties, ensuring respect and sensitivity throughout the process.

7.3 Resolution and Outcome

- Based on a comprehensive review of evidence, the Junior League Executive in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, will determine the appropriate course of action. This may include corrective action, disciplinary measures, referral to peak rugby league bodies (Penrith & District Rugby League, NSW Rugby League, NRL) and where appropriate, the police.
- The Junior League Executive will inform the complainant (and affected parties as appropriate) of the resolution, while respecting confidentiality constraints.
- The Junior League Executive / Child Safety Officers will offer ongoing support and conduct reviews to ensure that the child's safety is maintained post-resolution.

7.4 Appeal Process

- Right to Appeal: Any party unsatisfied with the outcome has the right to appeal the decision in writing within 14 days.
- Independent Review: The Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors will form a small committee to conduct an internal review for appeal cases.

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

8.1 Secure Storage:

- All records related to complaints shall be stored securely, in line with data protection laws and organisational policies.
- Information will be shared strictly on a need-to-know basis and only with those directly involved in the investigation.
- Unless explicit consent is provided, all identifying details of the complainant and other involved parties will remain confidential.

9. Training and Communication

- **Regular Training:** All staff and volunteers will undergo regular training on safeguarding practices and complaint procedures.
- **Policy Awareness:** The complaint handling policy will be readily accessible to all members of St Marys Rugby League Club and will be communicated during onboarding and ongoing refresher courses.
- **Feedback:** All stakeholders (volunteers, officials, parents, players and employees) are encouraged to provide feedback on the complaint handling process to foster continuous improvement.

10. Monitoring, Reporting, and Review

- Ongoing monitoring of all safeguarding-related complaints will be implemented through periodic reviews and audits of cases.
- This policy shall be reviewed annually and / or following significant incidents. Changes to the policy will be communicated to all stakeholders promptly.

11. Additional Considerations

- St Marys Rugby League Club may collaborate with external parties such as child protection services, law enforcement, the Office of Children's Guardian and peak rugby league bodies to ensure that the complaint handling process meets best practice.
- **Continuous Learning:** Use insights garnered from investigations to fine-tune safeguarding practices and to foster a safer environment for children within St Marys Rugby League Club.

This Complaints Handling Policy is integral to our commitment to maintaining a safe and protective environment for children involved in St Marys Rugby League Club. It not only serves as a guideline for managing complaints but also reinforces our dedication to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in safeguarding practices.